

arXiv in the classical Russian literature

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The creation of arXiv, a highly democratic open access repository of research papers in high-energy physics more than twenty years ago [1, 2] was undoubtedly the most spectacular and landmark event for the high-energy physics community. However, the following curious observation indicates that the general cultural significance of this event extends far beyond the boundaries assumed at the beginning.

Recently *Notices of the American Mathematical Society* published [3] a tribute to Vladimir Arnold, an eminent Russian mathematician who passed away in 2010. The tribute contains translated fragments of the Arnold's 1990 interview which he gave to a Russian magazine Kvant (Quantum). In the interview Arnold worries about the fact that the prestige of fundamental sciences and of mathematics in particular declined practically in all countries. Governments and modern consumer society are more fond to applied sciences considering the fundamental research as a largely useless waste of money. Arnold considers such an attitude as extremely stupid, much like of the attitude of the hog from the I. A. Krylov's fable "The hog under the oak". At the end of the interview, the *Notices* exposes an English translation of the fable. It ends in the following way (besides the journal, the complete text of the translation, along with the Russian original, can be found on the translator's web page: <http://math.berkeley.edu/~giventh/krylov.pdf>)

Likewise, an ignoramus in defiance
Is scolding scientists and science,
And all preprints at lanl_dot_gov,
Oblivious of his partaking fruit thereof.

Krylov wrote this famous fable in 1823. The appearance of arXiv (bold-face emphasis is mine) in this excellent modernized translation by Alexander Givental and Elysee Wilson-Egolf I consider as highly symbolic. At our days arXiv is considered as a synonym of wisdom, scientific freedom, enlightenment and progress!

References

- [1] P. Ginsparg, It was twenty years ago today ..., arXiv:1108.2700 [cs.DL].
- [2] P. Ginsparg, arXiv at 20, Nature **476**, 145-147 (2011).
- [3] B. Khesin and S. Tabachnikov (coordinating editors), Tribute to Vladimir Arnold, Not. Amer. Math. Soc. **59**, 378-399 (2012).